United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ United Nations to launch inter-agency appeal for Rwanda on 22 July, and host pledging conference in Geneva on 2 August; Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to visit country to assess needs on ground.

+ UNHCR coordinates humanitarian airlift to aid more than 2 million Rwandan refugees; United States, Germany and United Kingdom provide aircraft.

+ Member States owe United Nations almost $2.9 billion as of 15 July; $837 million owed to regular budget and $2.03 billion to peace-keeping.

+ Secretary-General appeals to Member States to pay peace-keeping arrears now, saying operations face financial collapse; implements emergency measures to reduce or delay expenditures.

+ Secretary-General, in report to Security Council, says reduction in UNOSOM II troop strength feasible despite deteriorating security situation in Somalia; sees diplomacy as better option than military action.

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The United Nations will launch a consolidated inter-agency appeal for Rwanda on Friday, Under-Secretary-General Peter Hansen announced today. He told correspondents at Headquarters that there would be a pledging conference for donors in Geneva on 2 August. Mr. Hansen, who heads the Department for Humanitarian Affairs, said he would be going to Rwanda to help assess the needs on the ground. He would also seek to impress upon the Rwandan Government the importance of creating the right conditions for refugees and displaced persons to return home.

It was difficult to assess the situation because of the speed with which events were unfolding, Mr. Hansen continued. Some 500,000 people had been killed out of a total Rwandan population of 7.8 million; one third of the remainder had fled to neighbouring countries and another third were internally

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displaced. Hundreds of thousands of people had recently arrived in the Zairean towns of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira, and there was insufficient food in the pipeline. As a result, food was being diverted to the region from as far away as Angola and Sudan.

The United Nations had made a tremendous effort to cope with the crisis, Mr. Hansen said, citing the work of the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He noted that the allocation of $50 million dollars from the emergency revolving fund was being depleted, and stressed the need for a generous response to the upcoming appeal.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is coordinating a massive humanitarian airlift to bring relief supplies to over 2 million Rwandese refugees in an operation similar to the one conducted for Sarajevo. The supplies will initially be funneled through the airport in the Zairean town of Goma, which has been swamped by some 1 million refugees in the largest and swiftest exodus the UNHCR has ever witnessed. The United States, Germany and the United Kingdom have so far offered planes for the airlift.

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As of 15 July, Member States owed the United Nations a total of $2.87 billion, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Of that amount, $837 million was for assessments for the regular budget and $2.03 billion was for peace-keeping operations.

The total of outstanding regular budget contributions had declined from $950 million as of 30 June, largely as a result of a payment made by Japan. The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $530 million to the regular budget and $750 million to the peace-keeping budget, while the Russian Federation owed some $540 million in peace-keeping contributions.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appealed to Member States to promptly pay any outstanding contributions to the United Nations peace-keeping budget. In a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 7 July, he said substantial payments were urgently needed if operations were not to face financial collapse within weeks. At the start of July, several major missions, including the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) and the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ), had no funds in their accounts. The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM), and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were in a similar position.

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The Secretary-General noted that the United Nations needed at least $200 million each month to sustain peace-keeping operations, and a further $100 million to reimburse troop-contributing countries. The situation was so grave several emergency measures had been taken: funds were being borrowed from some operations to meet the immediate needs of others; all operations were to reduce or delay expenditures as much as possible; procurement and recruitment were being postponed except where urgently required; and troop contributors were being asked to show forebearance. He pointed out that Member States had a collective responsibility to finance the operations which they had mandated, and reiterated that they should honour their commitments now.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said it might be feasible to start reducing the number of troop serving with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). In a report dated 18 July, the Secretary-General said he would review the Operation's strength and had asked his Special Representative to assess the prospects for national reconciliation. Although progress had been made in rebuilding national institutions, especially the police and judicial system, the security situation had deteriorated significantly, especially in Mogadishu. It was not clear whether UNOSOM II's contributions to security justified its size and cost. Through no fault of its own, the Operation had been unable to deal with the effects of inter-clan fighting. Its success in that area had been achieved through diplomatic rather than military means.

The Secretary-General said he would send a special mission to Somalia to discuss troop reductions with his Special Representative and the UNOSOM II Force Commander. The mission would pay special attention to the views of humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. He stressed that the security of UNOSOM II and humanitarian personnel would remain a high priority, particularly in light of the recent ambush of peace-keepers.

The Secretary-General went on to say that the international community could not be expected to indefinitely support the reestablishment of a peaceful and self-reliant Somalia. He urged Somali leaders to redouble their efforts towards national reconciliation on a basis of pluralism and mutual tolerence.

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